

The Meaning of "Christ"

What about the second part of the name "Jesus Christ"? What does the word "Christ" mean?

Actually, it isn't so much a proper name as it is a title. "Christ" comes from the Greek word **Christos**, meaning "anointed."

ungido

untado;

sagrado;

adj. e s. m.,

que ou aquele que foi ungido, que recebeu os Santos Óleos;

o escolhido.

Its meaning is the same as the Hebrew word **Messiah** (John 1:41).

They both mean "anointed" or "anointed one."

What is the significance of being anointed? The Jews of Jesus' day understood the meaning perfectly well. They were familiar with the Scriptures we call the Old Testament today; those writings were their guide for daily life. These very Scriptures, said Jesus, foretold His coming and purpose. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me," He thundered to those who refused to believe (John 5:39).

The Jews of Christ's day expected a Messiah, an anointed one (John

4:25). They knew the significance of anointing, so they understood what the role of the Messiah would be. Without the background of the Old Testament, the term "Messiah" becomes meaningless, resulting in a shallow and distorted understanding of who and what Jesus Christ is.

Those who expected a Messiah knew that, in the Old Testament, anointing was used in four extraordinary situations to set someone or something apart for a special purpose. Each of these teaches us something about Jesus Christ, His purpose and His mission, about why He is called the Anointed One.

Dedicated for God's Use

The first significant act of anointing occurred in Exodus 40. After Israel's miraculous departure from Egypt, God gave the Israelites detailed instructions for building the tabernacle, an elaborate tented structure designed to be the center of worship for the nation. After its completion, God told Moses, "Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy" (Exodus 40:9, New International Version).

This act of anointing would "consecrate" the tabernacle.

Consecrate means to dedicate or set something apart for holy use.

Through this anointing, the tabernacle and the objects in it were set apart for God's sacred use and service. Anointing was symbolic of that setting apart.

What significance does this have in Jesus Christ's life and mission? He was often called a prophet (John 6:14, 7:40), and said of Himself that He was a prophet (Luke 4:24, 13:33). He clearly foretold the future during His physical ministry on earth. In Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, He prophesied of events that would lead up to His return to earth. The four Gospels contain many prophecies about His disciples and the future Church, and the book of Revelation is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1).

Is foretelling the future the most important thing Christ discussed? Even though Christ did foresee the future, that is a relatively small part of what is recorded for us about Him and His life. A prophet isn't just someone who reveals the future. A prophet is someone who reveals the will and purpose of God to mankind.

What did Christ speak about during His time on earth? "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak...Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father

has told Me, so I speak" (John 12:49, 50).

Divine and holy teacher

What did He reveal? "Whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak." He revealed exactly what God the Father told Him to reveal. He taught and revealed the plan, purpose and will of God. He foretold the future, but even more than that, He was a divine and holy Teacher, revealing God's wonderful purpose and plan for mankind.

What does that teach us about Jesus Christ?

How does that fit into His role as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One?

Simply put, His entire life was set apart for God's holy use. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work," said Jesus (John 4:34). That was His motivation, His source of strength. His reason for living was to do the will of God the Father.

"...The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner," Jesus said (John 5:19).

The Meaning of "Jesus"

What does "Jesus" mean? How did He receive that name? Did Joseph and Mary choose it because they liked the sound of it? Was it the name of a relative or family member? Why was Jesus named "Jesus"?

In Matthew 1 we find that Mary was discovered to be pregnant during her engagement to Joseph. Joseph, not wanting to embarrass this young woman he loved, was considering how to best handle the difficult situation.

"But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'" (verses 20, 21).

The New Testament was written in Greek, and the name "Jesus" here means the same in Greek as the Hebrew name "Joshua." "Joshua" means literally God is salvation. So the angel's message to Joseph was "You shall call His name 'God is salvation,' for He will save His people from their sins." That name tells us of Jesus' purpose in God's plan-that it is through Him that

God saves humanity.

How are we saved?

But how are we saved through Jesus Christ?

There are two important aspects of salvation through Jesus Christ.

First, we must realize that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). We have all earned for ourselves the death penalty (Romans 6:23). Death is the total loss of consciousness and awareness forever (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10). By our sins, we have earned eternal death-the right to be blotted out of consciousness, no longer to exist, not even to be remembered, for all time. We have earned the right (if it could be called a right) to be erased from reality forever.

That's the hopeless situation we would be in without Jesus Christ. The death penalty we have earned would be carried out, and there would be nothing left for us, no hope for anything beyond the grave (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

The Meaning of Baptism

* Rise - living
ascender

In a religion based on faith, why have any rituals at all? What does this have to do with the gospel?

Rituals were a prominent part of Old Testament worship. Christianity, in contrast, has only two basic rituals: baptism and the Lord's Supper — and there are no detailed regulations for either observance.

In a religion in which faith is primary, why have any rituals at all?

The primary reason, I believe, is that these two rituals picture the gospel of Jesus Christ. They rehearse the fundamental elements of our faith. Let's see how it works for baptism.

Pictures the gospel

How does baptism picture the central truths of the gospel? The apostle Paul wrote:

"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (Rom. 6:3-5).

Paul is saying that baptism *unites* us with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. These are the primary points of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Our salvation depends on his death and on his resurrection. Our forgiveness — being cleansed of sin — depends on his death; our Christian life and future depend on his resurrected life.

Baptism symbolizes the death of the old self — the old person was crucified with Christ — died with Christ — buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:8; Gal. 2:20; 6:14; Col. 2:12, 20). It pictures our identification with Jesus Christ — we cast our lot in with him. We accept that his death was "for us," "for our sins."

We acknowledge that we have sinned, that we have a tendency to sin, that we are sinners in need of a Savior. We acknowledge our need to be cleansed, and that this cleansing comes through the death of Jesus Christ. Baptism is one of the ways in which we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Raised with Christ

Baptism pictures even better news — in baptism we are *raised* with Christ so that we might live with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1). In him, we have a new life, and are called to live a new way of life, with him as Lord leading and guiding us out of sinful ways and into righteous and loving ways.

In this way we symbolize repentance, a change in the way we live, and also the fact that we cannot make this change in ourselves — it is done by the power of the risen Christ living in us. We identify with Christ in his resurrection not just for the future, but for life right now. This is part of the symbolism. Jesus did not invent the ritual of baptism. It developed within Judaism, and was used by John the Baptist as a ritual to show repentance in which the water symbolized cleansing. Jesus continued this practice, and after his death and resurrection his disciples continued to use it. It dramatizes the fact that we have a new basis for life, and a new basis for our relationship with God.

Paul saw that since we are forgiven or cleansed through the death of Christ, baptism pictures his death and our participation in his death. Paul was also inspired to add the connection with Jesus' resurrection. As we rise from the baptismal waters, we picture rising to a new life — a life in Christ, with him in us.

Peter also wrote that baptism saves us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). However, baptism itself does not save us. We are saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Physical water removing physical dirt cannot save us, Peter said. Baptism saves us only in the sense that it is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God." It is a visible representation of repentance, faith in Christ, forgiveness and new life, and those are what actually save us.

Into one body

We are baptized not only into Christ Jesus, but also into his body, the church. "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). That means that a person cannot baptize himself — it must be done within the context of the Christian community. There are no secret Christians, people who believe in Christ but no one knows about it. The biblical pattern is to confess Christ before other people, to make a public acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord.

Baptism is one of the ways in which Christ may be confessed, in which all a person's friends may see

resurgere
resurgere

resurrectio

late latin resurrectio

← (resurrectiones)
(renewances)

that a commitment has been made. It may be a joyous occasion in which the congregation sings hymns and welcomes the person to the family. Or it may be a smaller ceremony in which an elder (or some other authorized representative of the congregation) welcomes the new believer, rehearses the significance of what is being done, and encourages them in the spiritual disciplines that will assist the person to live in Christ.

Baptism is basically a ritual recognizing that a person has already repented of sin, already accepted Christ as Savior, already begun to grow spiritually — is in fact already a Christian. Baptism is generally done soon after a person has made a commitment, but occasionally it may be done much later.

Teens and children

After a person has come to faith in Christ, he or she is eligible for baptism. This may be when the person is quite old, or when quite young. A young person may explain faith differently than an older person does, but young people may have faith nonetheless.

Teenagers and even younger children may have genuine sorrow over sin, genuine faith that Christ has paid for their sins, and genuine commitment to Christ, and they may be baptized.

Will some of them eventually change their minds and fall away? Perhaps, but that happens with adult professions of faith, too. Will some of those childhood conversions turn out to be mistaken? Perhaps, but that happens with adults, too.

If the person is repentant and has faith in Christ, as best as the pastor can determine, then the person may be baptized. It is not our practice, however, to baptize minors without the consent of their parent or legal guardian. If the minor's parent objects to baptism, then the child who has faith in Jesus is no less a Christian for waiting until he or she becomes a legal adult to be baptized.

It is not our practice to baptize infants or children too young to express faith for themselves, since we understand baptism to be an expression of faith, and no one is saved by their parents' faith. We do not, however, condemn as unchristian those who do practice infant baptism.

By immersion

We baptize by immersion. We believe that was the most likely practice in first-century Judaism and in the early church. We believe that complete immersion pictures death *and* burial better than sprinkling does.

However, we do not make the method of baptism an issue to divide Christians. The important thing is that the person forsakes the old life of sin, and has faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. To use the analogy of death again, we might say that the old person died with Christ, whether or not the body was properly buried. Cleansing was pictured, even if burial was not. The old life is dead, and the new life is here.

Salvation does not depend on the exact method of baptism (the Bible doesn't give us many details on procedure, anyway) nor on the exact words, as if the words had some magical power of their own. Salvation depends on faith in Christ, not on the depth of the baptismal waters.

A Christian who was baptized by sprinkling or pouring is still a Christian. If such a person wishes to become a member of our denomination, we do not require a new baptism, unless the person believes it appropriate. Christianity is based on faith, not on performance of a ritual.

The big picture

Let us focus on the larger picture, provided to us by the apostle Paul: Baptism pictures our old self dying with Christ, our sins being washed away, our new life being lived in Christ and in his church. Baptism is an expression of repentance and faith, and a reminder that we are saved by the death and life of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel in miniature drama — the central truths of the faith being reenacted every time another person enters the kingdom of God.

If you have come to faith in Christ and would like to be baptized, we'd like to help. To find our congregations, pastors, beliefs, and other information, see our website churches.wcg.org or write Grace Communion International, P.O. Box 5005, Glendora CA 91740-0730.